



THE LEADERSHIP CONTEXT

Bouncing Back When You
Feel Bowled Over As a
Leader



Background

Andy was a consummate professional, driven to succeed and taking great pride in his work. Having started his career in healthcare and successfully rising to the top of his profession, he came to one of many challenges - that this was not providing the satisfaction nor lifestyle that he desired.

Exploring the immediate options available, Andy moved into a Sales Director role with a healthcare company where he could use his expertise and branch into the commercial world. This proved to be a life changing decision as from this point he had found his true calling in a commercial, sales environment.

With disciplined practice, energy and enthusiasm, Andy approached all his challenges and projects. He had natural leadership ability and strong collaboration skills which propelled him into project management roles and enabled his advancement up the career ladder.

Andy found himself as project lead of an organisation wide project, which would have significant outcomes and impacts for internal and external stakeholders. With a multi-million dollar budget, a cross functional team to lead, this had the potential for him to really shine.

What Andy was not prepared for was a range of events which all landed together. A range of setbacks - a death in the family; finding appropriate care for the ailing mother; an accident which resulted in an injury causing ongoing low grade pain; relationship challenges.

On the work side, a key contributor was lost to an external competitor; the budget was reduced; key project sponsors were changed and project team members were under pressure from their other leaders.

The outcome of all this was missed deadlines, stakeholder expectations not met, disgruntled team members and the sense that this once "star" project was turning into a lemon.

"Andy was a consummate professional, driven to succeed"

A new organisational head had been appointed. In a review of existing projects and personnel, Andy and his project came under scrutiny. In an assessment of



performance to expectation they were assessed to be not meeting expectations. In a competitive environment it was decided to discontinue the project.

The challenge

After having established a reputation and track record for consistent, high performance, Andy encountered a series of personal and professional challenges that culminated in him delivering compromised performance outcomes that impacted not only his individual performance but also that of his function and the entire organisation. Andy's reputation was in question and his "potential" for advancement was being seriously questioned. There was a very clear need to work with Andy to support him in re-establishing his performance edge.

Our approach

Andy presented for his initial coaching session with caution, apprehension and depleted emotional reserves. The disappointment in himself, the embarrassment of having it known and critiqued organisationally and the potential impact this would potentially have on his career prospects were all significant burdens. Andy had no previous experience of being anything other than an excellent performer - until now. He was struggling to deal with the situation and develop strategies to move forward.

Where are you headed?

Andy had always been driven to succeed. The first steps were to help Andy to re-engage with his vision of success. Often in setbacks people lose sight of what it is that they are striving towards. This creates confusion and can result in paralysis as there is no clarity.

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With the support of his coach, Andy re-examined his ideas and ideals of success. The recent personal setbacks had given him cause to question and re-evaluate what really mattered and what he really desired to achieve and why. They also reality tested the concepts to ensure the concepts were motivation and realistic.



This clarity provided an enormous foundation for Andy and feed his desire to move forward.

What did you learn?

Adult learning comes about through reflective practice. Taking the time to recount and examine events, actions and consequences provides valuable information to make meaning and understanding about "what went on".

Through coaching, Andy examined his experience. Though often difficult and painful the reflective process allowed Andy to get perspective about the reality of what had happened. He examined his responses, actions and recognised where this was helpful and where not.

This learning helped to identify where Andy's had strengths that can continue to be leveraged in the future and where there were gaps that needed filling. One of the greatest learnings were that Andy did not have a repertoire of practice and habits that were useful in supporting him bouncing back when encountering personal adversity.

Regaining confidence and gaining momentum

With his goals clearly established, Andy had a platform to reengage. Through working with his coach Andy identified practices to support his goal striving and his well being.

There were a number of actions and activities that Andy undertook to engage with his key stakeholders.

"the reflective process allowed Andy to get perspective about the reality of what had happened"



He approached the meetings with them as an opportunity to gain feedback about what he needed to do to "get from where he was to where he needed to be". He was also keen to use this as a forum to confirm that he had indeed taken the learning from his experience and was using as a positive to ensure future improved performance. One of the most significant changes Andy implemented was to carve out and jealously protect the time to attend to his health. His physical injury had reinforced the importance for him to be strong and healthy so he had the resources to focus on his work and other priorities. When you are in pain all the time it is difficult to be at your best.

Another strategy for Andy was to make good use of his networks. Rather than retreating when things were challenging, he began to identify and work with colleagues and others who could support and assist.

The successful outcomes

Through consistent effort, over 12 months, Andy regained his reputation as a performer and valuable asset to the organisation. His ability to take the learning from his experience, rebound from adversity and have the grit, determination and ability to not only "stick it out" but also rise to higher levels of performance than what was previously evidenced.

As the story of his renaissance is known in the organisation, he is sought out by people to act as a mentor.

Andy has since been promoted to a US based role in Head Office. He was secured this role due to his ability to integrate learning, his resilience and commitment.

The potential for a negative outcome from this experience is very real. Andy nearly lost his career and the organisation almost lost a valuable contributor and role model.

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